

The 2003 Deer Hunting Season

This section addresses the objectives to better understand landowners' involvement with deer hunting. In particular, the section examines landowners' participation in and characteristics of the 2003 deer seasons; self-described hunter typology; perception of threats to the future of deer hunting in Wisconsin; and landowners' reasons for deciding not to deer hunt in 2003.

Landowners that are Deer Hunters

More than one-half of the landowners surveyed hunt deer (Figure 21).

Figure 21 illustrates that landowners who are hunters dominate the southwest CWD eradication zone. Three-fifths (60%) of the landowners are deer hunters and the remaining 40 percent of the landowners are comprised of individuals that do not hunt but do not oppose deer hunting (38%) and landowners that oppose deer hunting (2%).

Years of Deer Hunting Experience

Deer hunting experience ranges from one year to 70 years. Among the landowners that hunt, the mean years of deer hunting experience is 31 (Figure 22).

Figure 22 shows that one-half of the hunters (50%) have more than 30 years of deer hunting experience. One-fifth of the hunters (22%) have more than 40 years of experience and only one hunter in ten (10%) has not more than ten years of deer hunting experience.

Deer Hunting Frequency

Landowners that hunt deer rarely miss a deer hunting season (Figure 23).

Figure 23 reveals that a vast majority of landowners who deer hunt participate most years or every year. Nearly three-fourths (72%) of the hunters go deer hunting every year and one-fifth (21%) go deer hunting most years. Only about one hunter in 20 (4.5%) has gone deer hunting less than half of the years since s/he started deer hunting.

Figure 21.

Landowners self description as a hunter.

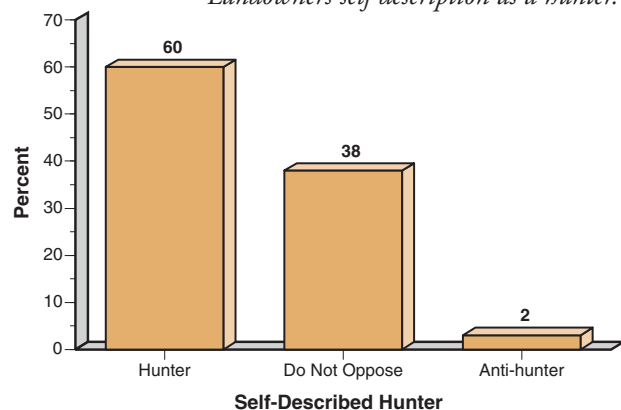


Figure 22.

Years of deer hunting experience.

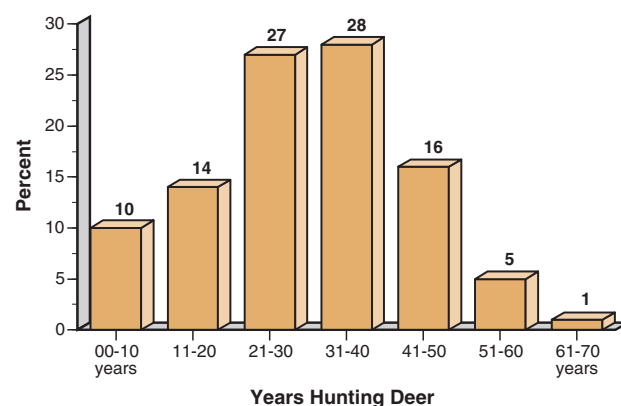
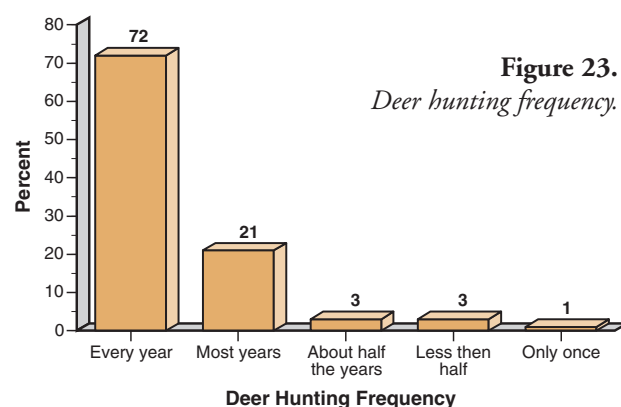


Figure 23.

Deer hunting frequency.



Deer Hunter Typology

From the perspective of lowering deer herd numbers, self-described hunter typology should benefit the state's disease eradication efforts. The vast majority of hunters are at least willing to harvest an antlerless deer rather than end their hunt without a deer (Figure 24).

Figure 24 illustrates that among landowners who hunt deer, a majority is hoping to harvest a buck. However, an even larger proportion is hoping to or willing to harvest an antlerless deer. More than one-half (57%) of the landowners who hunt are hoping to harvest a buck. About one-third of the hunters are trophy buck (15%) or buck hunters (16%). Nearly seven hunters in ten (69%) prefer to or are willing to take an antlerless deer and just over two-fifths (44%) prefer to hunt for antlerless deer (3%) or hunt for whatever happens by (41%). Interestingly, one-fourth (25%) of the hunters would prefer to take a buck but will harvest an antlerless deer rather than end their hunt without a deer.

Deer Hunting Participation in 2003

A slight majority of landowners hunted deer during the 2003 seasons. Of those hunters, nearly all hunted their own land or someone else's land in the DEZ (i.e., they did not leave the area to hunt deer).

Table 20. Landowner participation in deer hunting during 2003 seasons.

Hunting Participation	Percent
Hunted in 2003	52
Hunted DEZ	91
Hunted only outside DEZ	9
Hunters who did not hunt	10

Table 20 outlines that more than one-half of all landowners hunted deer during the 2003 seasons. Fifty-two percent of all landowners hunted deer in 2003 and of those landowner hunters, more than nine in ten (91%) hunted either their own land or someone else's land in the DEZ. Only 9 percent of landowners restricted his or her hunting to land outside the DEZ.

Within the landowners who consider themselves hunters, ten percent did not deer hunt

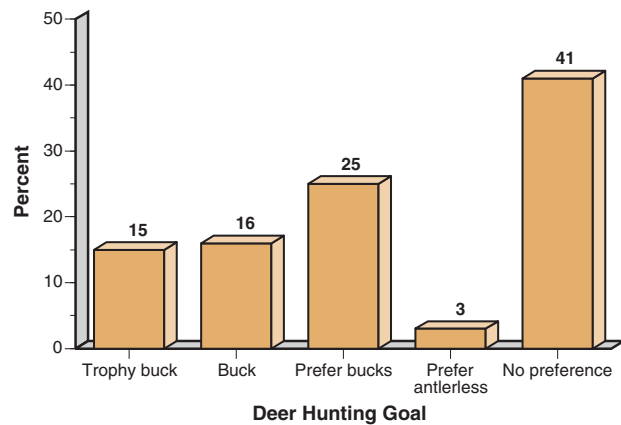


Figure 24. Self-described hunter typology.

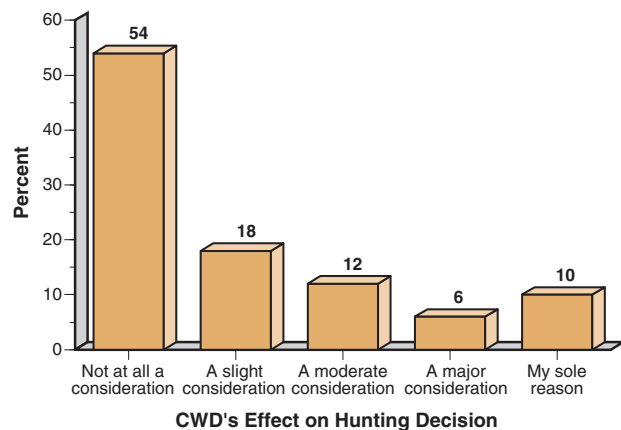


Figure 25. CWD's effect on hunting decision.

during the 2003 seasons. Among those non-participants (50 individuals), a minority say CWD was a consideration in their decision (Figure 25).

Figure 25 shows that of the hunters who elected not to hunt during the 2003 deer seasons (50 individuals), just over one-half (54%) say CWD was not a consideration. More than two-fifths (46%), however, report that CWD played some role in their decision not to hunt. Sixteen percent of the non-participating hunters say CWD was at least a major consideration in their decision not to hunt and for one non-participating hunter in ten (10%), CWD is the sole reason for not hunting in the 2003 deer seasons.

We should note that among all landowners who did not hunt deer during the 2003 seasons, most (83%) say that CWD played no role in their decision not to hunt.

Hunting Seasons

The traditional 9-day gun deer hunt remains the integral season in a multi-season framework. The early gun season that precedes the 9-day hunt is also a popular offering among the hunters (Table 21).

Table 21 explains that two-thirds (68%) of the hunters hunted at least one day outside of the traditional 9-day gun season and the mean number of days spent hunting in the DEZ in 2003 is 12.6 days. However, even with 70 days of gun and archery deer hunting opportunities preceding the traditional 9-day gun season, landowners hunted almost four days during the traditional season. The early gun season during the first weeks of November is also a popular season where landowners averaged four days of deer hunting. Although this is an average of only 18 percent of the season (on any given day there are less than half as many landowners out hunting as during the traditional gun season), it amounts to the greatest number of hunter-days, with 1,295 days reported hunting in this study.

In contrast, during the early archery season and the late gun season, landowners only use an average of five percent and seven percent, respectively, of the available days.

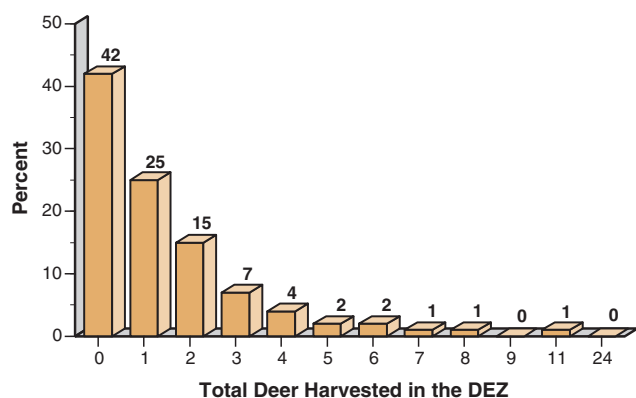


Figure 26. Total deer harvested in the DEZ.

Table 21. Number of days hunted during the 2003 deer seasons.

2003 Deer Hunting Seasons	Mean Number of Days	Minimum Number of Days	Maximum Number of Days	Total Number of Days
Days hunted from Sept 13 to Oct 29 (47 days)	2.5	0	35	784
Days hunted from Oct 30 to Nov 21 (23 days)	4.1	0	20	1,295
Days hunted from Nov 22 to Nov 30 (9 days)	3.8	0	9	1,189
Days hunted from Dec 1 to Jan 3 (34 days)	2.3	0	30	724
Total days hunting in DEZ (113 days)	12.6	0	68	3,992

Deer Harvested in the DEZ

As expected, landowners harvested more antlerless deer than bucks from the DEZ. The average number of deer harvested per hunter is just over one deer. Almost three-fifths of the hunters harvested at least one deer.

Table 22. Number of deer harvested by type.

Deer Harvested	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Total
Fawns	0.1	0	10	90
Does	0.6	0	10	193
Bucks	0.5	0	4	170
Total combined	1.4	0	24	453

Table 22 shows that landowners that participated in the hunting seasons took an average of 1.4 deer apiece from the DEZ during the 2003 seasons, for a total of 453 deer. It appears that landowners took more does than bucks, however, this is not a statistically significant difference.

Figure 26 shows that among the landowners that hunted during 2003, 58 percent harvested at least one deer. Analyzing these results further we can see that one-fourth (25%) of the hunters harvested one deer; one-fifth (22%) of the hunters harvested two or three deer; and just over one hunter in ten (11%) harvested four or more deer.

We should note that there is a correlation between number of days hunted and number of deer harvested ($r = 0.31$). Landowners who hunted during the early or late seasons in addition to the traditional 9-day season harvested an average of 1.9 deer apiece, while those who hunted only during the traditional 9-day season took an average of 1.0 deer apiece (t -test, significant at the $P < 0.001$ level).

2003 Deer Season Comparison

The additional hunting opportunities in 2003 was a benefit to about one hunter in six; that is, compared to previous deer seasons, this landowner harvested more deer in 2003.

Figure 27 reveals that only a minority of landowners report taking more deer than usual during the 2003 deer seasons. About one hunter in six (17%) harvested more deer during 2003 than most or any other deer season. The largest group of hunters (38%) reported that they harvested about the same number of deer in 2003 as they did during other deer seasons. Forty-six percent report that they harvested less deer than usual.

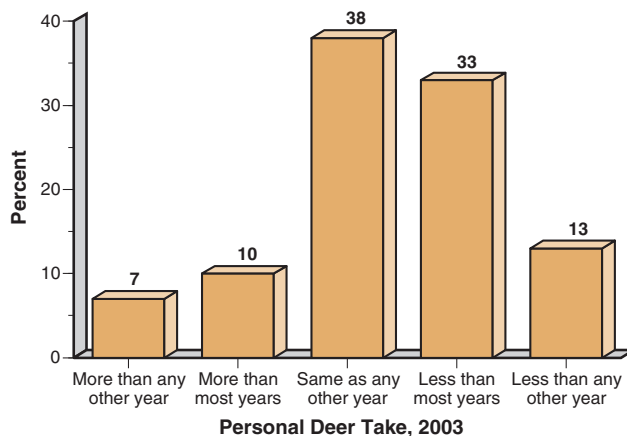


Figure 27. Deer harvest compared to pre-CWD seasons.

We should note that the 46 percent that report taking fewer deer than usual may be expressing their displeasure with the earn-a-buck requirement for hunters. That is, the earn-a-buck requirement hindered their hunting style by requiring them to shoot an antlerless deer prior to harvesting a buck.

Additionally, hunting during the early or late seasons has no measurable effect on the distribution presented in Figure 27. Also, as expected, those who are at least willing to take an antlerless deer are more likely than buck-only hunters to report that they harvested more deer during the 2003 seasons than most or any previous deer season (20 percent compared to nine percent, respectively). This finding is substantiated when personal deer kill is examined. A significantly higher proportion of buck-only hunters (47%) compared to willing antlerless hunters (38%) did not harvest any deer

during the 2003 seasons. A significantly higher proportion of willing antlerless hunters (37%) compared to buck-only hunters (24%) harvested two or more deer during the 2003 seasons.

Hunters Asking Permission to Hunt Private Land

A high majority of landowners had other hunters requesting permission to hunt their land (Figure 28).

Figure 28 confirms that most landowners report between zero and two people asking permission to hunt on their land during the 2003 seasons. About three landowners in ten (29%) say they did not receive any requests from people asking to hunt the landowners' property. One-third of the landowners (32%) report one to three people asking permission to hunt their land and about one-half of the landowners (49%) report one to five people asking permission to hunt their land.

Please note that for the data presented in Figure 28, the mean number of requests was 3.7, although that mean includes an extreme outlier who reports 200 requests. Excluding that one case, the mean number of requests is 3.4 per landowner.

Additionally, given the findings presented in Figure 10c and Table 17, it appears that these requests to hunt private land have little to do with CWD. It is likely during the years preceding CWD, that the landowners were receiving requests from other hunters for permission to hunt their land.

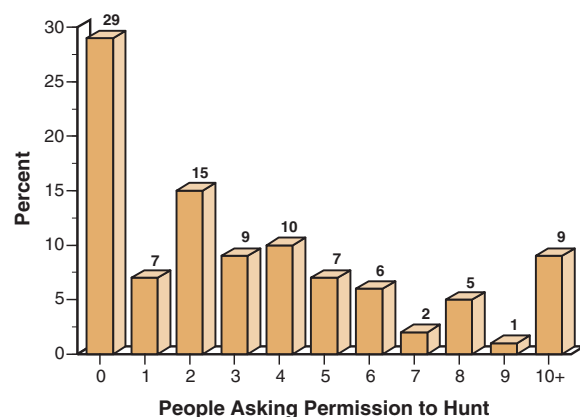


Figure 28. Number of other hunters asking permission to hunt landowners' land.

Number of People Who Hunted Landowner's Property

Although 40 percent of the landowners consider themselves non-hunters or anti-hunting (see Figure 21), more than 70 percent of the landowners had hunters on their land.

Figure 29 illustrates that more than seven landowners in ten (72%) have their land hunted by people other than themselves or their spouses; about three landowners in ten (29%) do not allow anyone else to hunt their land; one-third of the landowners (32%) have one to three other people hunt their land; and just over one-half of the landowners (51%) have one to five other people hunt their land.

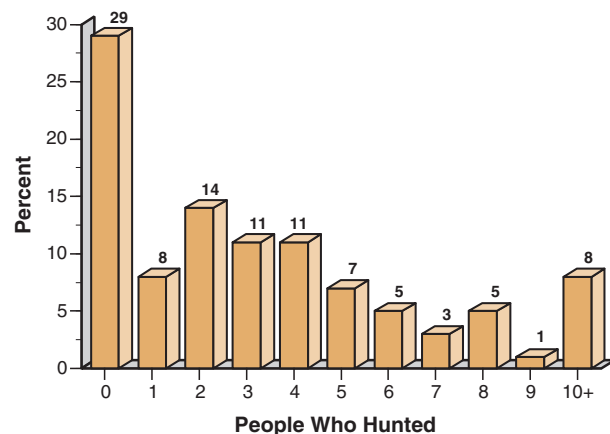


Figure 29. Number of other hunters that hunted the landowners' land.

Please note that analyzing the data used for Figure 29, the mean number of hunters on each landowner's property is 3.3.



© BRUNNER

Threats to the Future of Hunting

There are few issues that landowners see as serious threats to the future of deer hunting in Wisconsin. Landowners were asked to rank 17 possible threats to deer hunting on a scale of 1 to 9, where 1 represents "no threat", 3 represents "slight threat", 6 represents "moderate threat", and 9 represents "extreme threat." Respondents were then asked to select the single most serious threat to the future of deer hunting in Wisconsin. The mean scores and percent agreeing that the threat is most serious are found in Table 23.

Table 23 shows that of the 17 possible threats to deer hunting, landowners rank no issue as an "extreme" threat to the future of deer hunting in Wisconsin. The greatest threat is perceived to be CWD (mean response = 5.6), with one-fourth of the respondents (26%) saying it is the most serious threat. It is unclear, however, if the landowners are responding to concerns about the disease or the state's approach to disease management (e.g., the eradication plan). Other serious threats include the decreasing amount of public land available for deer

Table 23. Threats to the future of deer hunting in Wisconsin. (Mean scores followed by the same letter are not statistically different at $P \leq 0.05$.)

Threat to the Future of Hunting	Percent Agreeing Most Serious Threat	Mean Score ^a
Chronic Wasting Disease	26	5.6 A
Decreasing public land	8	5.4 A
Difficult access to private land	13	5.2 B
Too much private land	6	4.7 C
Too many people quitting	4	4.6 CD
Not enough new hunters	10	4.4 D
Anti-hunting groups	6	4.2 E
Complicated regulations	5	4.0 E
Too many competing activities	1	4.0 EF
Lyme disease in deer	1	3.9 EF
Cost of licenses	5	3.9 F
Tuberculosis in deer	1	3.9 FG
Not enough deer	9	3.8 FG
Too many regulations	3	3.6 G
Severe weather	1	3.0 H
Predators	< 1	2.4 I
Difficult to get licenses	< 1	2.2 J

^a Landowners were asked to rank 17 possible threats to deer hunting on a scale of 1 to 9, where 1 represents "no threat," 3 represents "slight threat," 6 represents "moderate threat," and 9 represents "extreme threat."

hunting (mean response = 5.4), and difficulty obtaining access to private land (mean response = 5.2). The least threatening issues are predators (mean response = 2.4) and difficulty obtaining licenses (mean response = 2.2).

As heard in the focus groups:

My fear is for the young people, they are very vulnerable to what people say. The DNR comes out with that scare tactic. The young girls that are getting married, they absolutely won't eat deer. They tell their husbands to go out and have a good time but don't bring a deer back. Now, their kids are going to follow the same, too. What is going to happen if this keeps going 20 years from now? Who's going to shoot these deer off? I'm afraid that hunting as it was...the antis are pushing this CWD because they know that's going to save the deer. There are going to be less hunters.

I think it's more CWD policy. [Tell me more about that.] I think the policy response in the eradication zone is destroying deer hunting as we know it. We've eroded the traditional fabric of our deer hunting seasons. Our bow hunters are dwindling by the wayside terribly. Bow hunting is probably half of what it was pre-CWD policy. I believe in 70a, which is completely within the eradication zone, during the first year of the eradication attempt the deer kill in 70a was 80 percent below the ten-year average. I believe last year it was 22 percent below the ten year average and I think what we need to do, we need to go back to the traditional season framework in order to try to repair that to get our hunters back.



Land Ownership and Personal Background

This section is intended to help understand who responded to the survey. It summarizes four land ownership attributes and seven socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Land Ownership Attributes

In general, survey respondents are full-time residents and farmers of the DEZ, they have owned land in the DEZ for about 20 years, and have farm operations of about 100 acres (Table 24).

Table 24. Land ownership attributes.

Attribute	Percent
Land owned in DEZ	
Total 5-50 acres	53
Total 51-100 acres	19
Total 101-200	14
201+ acres	14
Mean total acres	95 acres
Mean acres owned alone	80 acres
Mean acres owned with others	16 acres
Years of land ownership	
0-5 years	18
6-10 years	21
11-20 years	23
21-30 years	20
31+ years	19
Mean years	19 years
Land as residence	
Primary residence	69
Recreational, not primary residence	24
Neither primary nor recreational	8
Farm on DEZ land	
Dairy/beef	37
Cash crop	43
Deer/elk farm	0
Other farming	37

Table 24 shows that the mean amount of total acreage owned per landowner is 95; just over one-half of the landowners (53%) own 50 acres or less; respondents have owned land in the DEZ for an average of 19 years; and about two-fifths of the landowners (39%) have owned land in the DEZ for more than 20 years. In addition, nearly seven out of ten landowners (69%) report that the land they own in the DEZ is their primary residence and one-third of the landowners (32%) could be considered absentee-landowners. Almost all